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HENRY WARD BEECHER.

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CHILDREN.

"Take heed that ye despise not one of these little ones; for I say unto you, that in heaven their angels do always behold the face of my Father which is in heaven."—Matt. xviii. 10.

The spring has come—the time in which, throughout all the temperate zones, the young are beginning to come forth. The yard, the field, and the edges of the forest hear the bleat of the lamb and the calf. The animals are rejoicing in their own rude way, and filling the scene with content and delight. There is universal beautifulness in the young, outside of the limits of the human family—the young that have begun to develop their powers. The offspring of animals are extremely graceful and extremely beautiful; and many of those animals which are in their full-grown estate repulsive are in their early estate very attractive. Lambs; calves; colts; pigs, eminently; young dogs; kittens; wild whelps, whether of the fox, the wolf or the lion—no man can see these, when they do not know that any one is looking at them, indulging in their frolics, and not admire their grace, and in many respects their eminent beauty. And if one sit by and see the maternal love which is manifested—its fondness, its patience, its wiles, its caresses—one cannot but have sympathy, and feel that there is a strain of experience which runs through beasts and men.

To the animal kingdom, we apply no moral measurements. The life of an animal, whatever it may be in fact, is universally assumed to be secular. Animals grow up, without school or care, to all that they have in them. The lion's whelp needs no master to teach it how to be a lion in every particular. The tiger and the panther never fail to have their offspring well brought up. Every bird, without a singing-master, learns his song. Every animal, without being put to an apprenticeship, has an instinct by which he learns the limited art which belongs to his life. A beaver is a builder from the beginning, and requires no outward help.

The idea of good and bad is never attached to animals that have

SUNDAY MORNING, May 11, 1873. LESSON: Luke xvii. HYMNS (Plymouth Collection): Nos. 255, 847, 1157.

in them very little choice between right and wrong, but are impelled by a creative necessity. There can be no such thing as right and wrong unless there is a moral endowment; for wrong is a variation from given rules; and where there is no perception of rules, or where rules do not exist, there cannot be any such quality as wrong.

It is only when we rise through all the correlative and inferior creations to the level of our own selves that we begin to look upon the little ones with a different measure, and with a consciously different experience. In the human family, when children are looked at in the light of moral government; when they are regarded as accountable and responsible beings; when they are to live under multiplex laws; when they are to have their character determined by their knowledge of these laws, and their relative obedience to them; when their condition, here and hereafter, is believed to turn on this character; when their very immortality is colored by that which they are, and by that which they do or avoid, in this life—then there arises to our thought something more than their grace and their sweetness and their beauty. It is not enough that we rejoice in seeing their gambols, as we do the frolics of little animals. There hovers over children a thought so vast, so deep, so far-reaching, that were it not for faith and hope, it seems to me no man could look upon children but with sadness. The questions which brood over them are tremendous.

It is not to promote discontent, it is not to excite thoughts of gloom, that I shall look, first, upon the dark side of this subject: it is because I know that such considerations as I shall suggest exist in the hearts of multitudes of people. It is because many people feel guilty in having such thoughts, and do not know what to do with them. It is because a great many, having them, turn away from, lift themselves above, and set themselves against what seems to me to be the only remedy which there is for their trouble on this point. I desire to show them, as far as I can, that the apprehensions which afflict them are entertained by others—by all who have hope in God, and believe in immortality; and that there is, though we may not be able to show it, a way out of the darkness, and into the light.

Consider, first, the fact that children depend very largely for their chances in this world upon their organization both physical and mental. They are brought into life without their own knowledge, and without their own consent. They are not always brought into life under circumstances which are best for them, so far as we can judge.

For example, it would seem as though leprous persons should never give birth to children; but they do. It would seem as though persons who are so far gone in scrofulous complaints as to be sure to entail on their posterity a fragile constitution, a constitution so devoid of stamina that it will break down in the midst of its duty, should never be permitted to have offspring; but they are permitted. They come together in the married state, and are certain to transmit to their children, not simply disease, but ill-assorted faculties and temperaments which will work against them all their lives long. They come together to endow their children with inevitable misery. And there is no angel that stands to warn them. There is no knowledge prepared for men and women even yet. After so many years, and after science has gone so far as it has, there is but the most obscure instruction that can be given in this direction, so little even now is known, or has been known in days gone by. And if we are to believe, as has been believed by good men in all ages, that the condition of human beings in the life to come depends upon their attainments and their state in this life, and that their state in this life is put almost beyond their control by the unwisdom or the mistakes of parents who have thrown them into life badly organized, then how strange is the mystery! Are children so dear to God? Are they so dear to Christ? Are they under the convoy of angels? If so, how is it that they should be permitted to come into this life in so strange a way; that there should be no provision whatever by which those who enter into parentage should be endowed with knowledge? They are themselves but twenty years of age. What do they know for themselves? And how much less are they prepared, as parents, to do anything for those little children on the doing of which, we are taught, depends their immortality?

I confess to great trouble on these subjects. I never brood upon them in my own thought without surprise. If I were to take a child of mine, five years old, and put him into a steamer, with a ponderous engine, and all the appliances for making a voyage, and shove him out without captain, without pilot, without any helper, and tell him to cross the sea, or be irretrievably lost, I could never forgive myself. It would be cruel thus to launch a child on the sea that did not know anything about the hull, nor that which propels it, nor the currents, nor the winds, nor the waves—that did not know anything about navigation; but how are children launched into this world, coming, through a portal of ignorance to a life in which they are ignorant! And yet we are taught that their safety depends on things

which are not made known to them; on things, for instance, in respect to their bodies, of which they understand nothing, or about which their understanding is perverted. And they make this perilous voyage of life without a knowledge of its laws; without a knowledge of their physical structure; without a knowledge of the mind which they carry; without a knowledge of those laws which govern the conscience; without a knowledge of society. They are all of them scholars from the very first, with poor instructors. And parents, oftentimes, are conscious of their profound ignorance about their children. They bring them up by routine or empiricism. And when you come to think of the child's destiny; when you come to think of his life beyond the grave; when you come to think of the teachings of Scripture in regard to the eternal world and of the judgment-day; and then, when you come to look at the way in which children are brought into life, oftentimes by vicious parents, and oftentimes under circumstances in which they are sedulously taught in evil, and sent adrift with apparently so little divine help and succor, it is enough to make a man shiver to his very soul with doubt and fear, and sometimes with anguish.

Consider, too, how little the best are likely to know under the conditions in which they are made teachers of their little ones. I have spoken of those who transmit to their children very imperfect physical health and very imperfect mental constitutions, and who are quite as likely to pervert them as to build them up in right things; but consider how it is in regard to those who stand far higher in the scale than these. The majority who are set to train children influence them against their moral benefit, training them for physical and for secular things; training them for self; training them in pride, and in vanity; but consider how, even under civilized conditions, and under Christian institutions, parents come together to rear children on whose destiny the most tremendous issues depend. And consider how utterly unknowing they are, being hardly more than children themselves. If the bringing of children into life had been given only to those who had grown wise, and had studied so as to be prepared to take care of children, it would not, perhaps, have surprised us; but it is not so. Even to those who are the best endowed in their spiritual nature, who have had the advantage of the best methods of education, and who have had the best opportunities to learn what drill a child stands in need of—even to them their children are a bundle of mysteries; and all that they try to do, or can do, for the most part, in the early days of their children's lives, is to rear them as little animals, and then

little by little instruct them in conventional morals, and then in the higher forms of morality.

Now, if to steer exactly right across this world were heaven, and anything less than that were eternal destruction, what hope would there be there for any child? For one, I cannot see how any parent can look upon his child in any way except with skepticism as towards the current theology, or else in a spirit of despair. When I look out upon the globe, and see how the population is thrown upon it; when I see children coming down, sent, as it were, almost as carelessly as flakes of snow fall in winter, or as drops of rain fall in summer, some hitting on rocks, some on the water, some in the fields, and some in the wilderness; when I see how little has been known in regard to the development of children in the past, and how little is known on that subject even now, I confess to the profoundest surprise. If you consider this matter from the standpoint of Calvinism, and if you have courage to follow out the inevitable logic of that system as it is related, not only to the present, but to the whole future, I do not see how any man can dare to enter into the family state. If I were a Calvinist in the old accepted sense of that term, and believed in the character of God which is presented by that system, and in the theory of moral government which that system inculcates, I would not, so long as I had life and reason, bring into this world a creature the chances against whose salvation seemed to me a hundred to one.

I cannot express this feeling as well as one has expressed it who has written to me out of the depths of a deep nature. It is a woman's writing:

"How can Christians, who have shared in the inevitable pain, and observed some of the awful possibilities of the life that now is; who believe that the soul is immortal, and the wages of sin is death, *dare to marry?* dare to introduce into existence other immortals to swell the ranks of suffering humanity, when among their generations there must almost certainly be some whose souls are lost forever?

"Oh, I beg you will not put me off with the answer that such a question could only arise from a morbid state of mind, nor the plea that the world must needs be kept populated, and that the homes and children of Christian parents are the great reliance in Christianizing that population. I know that I can, and I hope am doing as much for the Saviour's little ones who have no parents, or worse than none, as I would do for my own; and though when alone, and faint and weary, the unutterable sweetness of human love appeals to me—when my womanhood cries for its completion and crown in wifehood and motherhood—I have kept sternly on my way, resolved that no child, or child's child, should ever cry from hell to me, remorseful in heaven, '*Why did you give me life?*'

"May God in his wisdom and tenderness teach you the word to say to me.

"In all humility, and desiring only to know my Lord's will, and to do it,

and praying for his blessing on you and yours, privately and in public, I am——"

And so on, signing her name.

What have you to answer to such an appeal, or cry, rather, of a human heart, as that? If the chances were nine in favor, and one against your child's salvation, would you dare to take that one chance in ten?

Brethren, these are questions which are asked in a thousand hearts, and in a thousand families. They are questions which the theological systems must answer, or acknowledge that they cannot meet the whole case, and that they have failed to make a proper statement of the facts connected with the moral government of God in this world.

When we look at these facts we need to have a brighter side presented. We need some solace. We need some explanation, if it may be had. At any rate, we need hope. We need to believe that a malign Deity does not reign. We need to believe that the average of human life and society is not so bad in its results as we have been taught to suppose. We need a faith that there is, ultimately, in the divine love, and in the divine resources throughout the universe, a recuperative energy far greater than we have been accustomed to attribute to them. I need it to keep up my hope.

Consider, then, the other side a little. Look at the conduct and teaching of the Lord respecting children. When he was teaching the multitude, parents who had their children with them desired to bring them to him, that he might bless them. The disciples had a full share of that egotism which belongs to adult life. They were men of function and station; and feeling their importance, they brushed away the nurses and parents, and said, "Do not trouble the Master." It is said that Christ was exceedingly grieved. The language is very strong in regard to the outburst of resentful feeling in the Master. He was angry, and he rebuked the disciples before the multitude, saying:

"Suffer little children to come unto me, for of such is the kingdom of heaven."

Elsewhere he says:

"Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall in no wise enter into the kingdom of heaven."

People sometimes ask me, "Do you suppose that children of parents who are not Christians, children that have not been baptized, children that have not been entered into the covenant of God with little children, are saved, or are safe when they die?" I say to them, "The Master taught that the grown-up man could

not be saved unless he went back and got into the condition which little children are in." Is that a risky, perilous condition, to which we must ourselves be transmuted by divine power, going back on our adult experience, to reach that which they have in the very beginning?

But in the text we have a still more striking declaration of the Master:

"Take heed that ye despise not one of these little ones; for I say unto you, That in heaven their angels do always behold the face of my Father which is in heaven."

There has been a world of discussion as to what that means particularly. I do not know what it means *particularly*, but I know what it means *generally*. I know this: that whatever may be the special theory of angelic ministration, Jesus taught, and was understood to teach, that there was a care, in the presence of God, over children, which made them hopeful, safe. And as Christ was God manifested in the flesh, and came to make known to men, by visible, understandable teachings, what were the feelings of God, he taught us what was the divine feeling respecting children. He did not say, "Let elect children come to me, and let me put my hands on them, and bless them." He did not say, "Let the children of the favored nation come to me." He said, substantially, "Let children at large come." Is it claimed that they were probably Jewish children? There was in Galilee as large a population of Gentiles as of Jews. All nations were represented in this crowd. Foreigners came to him for help in sickness as much as the native population; and it is assumption to say that these children were not gathered from every people.

Christ, looking upon them, said:

"Their angels do always behold the face of my Father which is in heaven."

The ministering angel of children is the favorite in heaven, and stands in the presence of his Sovereign, and is in power. It was the teaching of the Lord in respect to little children, that in the great scheme of the universe God is on their side. And if, when children are brought into the world, you look at them in the light of natural causes; if you look at them not merely along the line of civil and political influences, but also along the line of the teaching of Christ, and see that both realms are luminous with instrumentalities; if you believe there is a current, besides the earth-current, which carries on a work that our eyes cannot see, in accordance with the declaration *that the kingdom of God does not come with observation;* if you believe that the mind and will of God is characterized by a love which is greater than anything that earthly father

or mother knows; if you believe that God broods over the infant population of the globe, and that, though they have no pilot nor teacher here, He is both Pilot and Teacher to them; if you believe in such a divine providence special to children, adapted to their want and life, and applicatory to them in the ratio of their weakness and their need—then the cloud is gone, and it is noonday. For though I do not know how it is that children shall be guided from childhood to manhood; and though I cannot understand the whole interplay of the scheme of God's interference in behalf of children; yet tell me that there is such a scheme and such an interference, and I am content to believe it without knowing how it is true. The thought that God loves children; that he broods over them with parental care; that he watches them through their inexperience and ignorance and unfavorable biasing; that he is busy bringing them up to a position where they are masters of themselves; and that then their responsibility does not come to them according to human law, but is measured by God, the infinite Lover, according to what they have had given them, and what they are, and what they can do—this thought, if it does not wholly take away the distress of former painful considerations, alleviates them greatly in my mind.

Leaving out, now, these questions of the safety of children, and leaving out our wonder at the way in which children are brought into life, let us look somewhat at the economy which comes with this help, and at the uses which there are, in many repects, in the condition in which children come into life.

It is probable that every one of the traits of higher manhood in adults springs from the drill and the training which little children require and inspire. I doubt whether preceptual teaching could ever have brought into this world any considerable degree of disinterested affection. I doubt if self-denial, and heroism in that direction, could ever have been propagated in this world as a matter of duty. Conscience never brings forth love. Intellectual reasoning never produces rich and warm caresses. It is the economy of God's providence to set men and women together in the household and give them little children, and draw them toward these little children by the instinct of love (instinct in the early day, and companionable love in a later day), and out of this love to develop all the character, forethought and industry which are necessary for the good of these children. There are men who are very selfish toward their neighbors, very selfish in their business, very selfish in their pleasures; there are men who, as citizens, are not true to the laws under which they

live, nor true to the commonwealth, but who, if you go into their households, and see how they deal with their children, seem to have an entirely different nature. They lay aside the selfishness. The pride and greediness which characterize them out-of-doors are gone when they are in-doors. Indeed, the faults which they exhibit outside are often faults which they take on for the sake of being able to take care of the little children that are inside.

It is no small thing to bring up a child. "Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it," is very easy to say; but to "train up a child in the way he should go" is not so easy to do. The task is hard, though the text is short. And no man can recount the history of it. I think that the most wonderful book that could be written would be a book in which an angel should write all the thoughts that pass through a faithful mother's mind from the time that she first hears the cry of her child, and knows that it is born into the world, and rejoices in the midst of her griefs; from the moment of her absorption, or annihilation, pouring herself into the child. Her wonderful gladness of fatigue; her unwillingness to divide her care with any; her heroic sacrifice of all that is brightest and best in life, with no prospect of remuneration except the satisfaction which she feels in serving that little mute and helpless child—these are past description. Let the party drive, and the giddy dance whirl round, and the lights glisten: she that last year was a *belle*, courted on every side, and found her highest joy in the praises of multitudes of admiring suitors; she, the very height of whose joy, a few months ago, lay outside of herself in admiration, is now a mother. Behold her, in a little cottage, with no great wealth; with, it may be, only a moderate competence; with no witness; with none to praise, and, for the most of the hours of the day, with no companionship but a little babe, and a babe that cannot sing to her, but can only cry to worry her—that cannot even look at her and know her. No sound of music greets her ear. There is nothing to relieve the tedium of her life except this little one. It is her joy to take her babe, sick or well, night and day, and bear it in motherly arms. Whence this sudden transformation in which her pride has gone out, and selfishness in her is dead, and her life is transmuted into a providence?

Men who in all other things are living as other men do, selfish and proud, in the household are angelic—for here the father falls into the same partnership. Directly or indirectly he is made to participate in this bounty and culture of love.

When one of the little army of the family brings out its banner

and calls for volunteers, and another, and another, till the household has its regiment band, see how many there are that respond to the call. Look at those families where there are five, six, seven, eight, and, blessed be God, eleven, as there were in my father's household, where the center was—what? The eldest born, that now had grown large and strong, and that was subtle, and ingenious, and fertile in all expedient? Was it those whose faces were full of signs of prematurely developed knowledge? Was it those who had function and powers in life? Was it the grown-up boys and girls? No. Still the altar was the cradle, and the greater served the less. Was the babe sick? There was not a door in the house that dared to creak. The very foot of the hired servant in the kitchen was softened. All sights and all sounds were taken out of the way. The whole commonwealth of the household bowed down to weakness and to want. Was there ever such an emptying of self? Was there ever such a serving in the spirit of disinterested love?

Look at churches. See what a coarse way we have of making men good in churches. There can be instruction imparted in churches, but you can never get much disinterested kindness out of a church. In the household, however, manifestations of such kindness are seen continually. Every family goes through drill, and does not know what God is doing with it. In the family all the children serve the father and mother; serve them in love; serve them not in such a way as to abolish anything that is in them, but in such a way as to enable them to turn all their forceful faculties into the current of a purified and noble affection. They grow up in affiliations, giving and taking, and doing these things along the line of disinterested affection, and being taught to do them so. What an education this is!

Has it seemed strange to you that men destined to eternity should be brought into life through such a dark portal, and that they should have parents and teachers who know so little? Well, however these things may be to the spirit which prevails in the great currents of life, when the child comes into the sphere of the household he is surrounded by genial influences. It has become proverbial; it is the universal feeling; it is understood even among barbarous and savage nations, to a certain degree, and more and more as you go toward Christianity, that the household is God's temple of love. Every child joins the church of love, and is brought up under the influence of love. How wonderful is that economy!

Parents, as I said, do not know how to bring up their children.

They do not know, many of them, where the liver or the heart is. They do not know what a nerve is. They do not know anything about the functions of these organs. But they know how to love; and love is encyclopædiac. Everybody who knows how to love will find out through love everything else. Considering how ignorant parents are, children are wonderfully brought up. When I see what children go through, I think they are the toughest atoms in creation.

Consider that probably the distinctive ideas of the divine government are better to be derived from the relation of parent and child than from any other source whatsoever. I do not mean that all conception of God's government and governing are exhausted in the round of the household; for I perceive that there are elements of divine government which have their exposition in the physical globe, and that any complete rendering of the divine government must take account of physical laws, and the absoluteness that is in them. I perceive, also, that there are in physical, social, political and moral economies, ideas of moral government which must be taken account of in framing a perfect theory of divine government. But I perceive that that which is distinctive and powerful in Christianity, or in the divine moral government, is found in the realm of the household. And I think it may be said that God's moral government, looked at as a whole, must include that which we see in the family, and that we see its peculiar nature in the developments and disclosures which are taught in the experience of life between parents and children as we see it nowhere else. God does not govern men as he does rocks and inanimate matter; nor does he govern them as states and nations are governed: he governs them individually according to those principles which are evolved in our own economy and experience in the family. He is a Father. He was represented as the God of nature who thundered and lightened, in the early day; but as men came to understand it, he was developed more to them as a magisterial God, a King, a Ruler; and when Christ came he taught men one universal prayer to be repeated till the world shall swing its pendulum for the last time; and that prayer for all men begins by saying, "Our Father." I stand by that prayer. I stand by all the teaching in analogy with it in the New Testament. And I say that the more we come to comprehend the nature of God and his government and administration, the more we shall see that the relation of a Father, the dynamic influence of love, is to be taken into account, and that everything that shall traverse or set aside the great principle of divine love in the moral government of

God is treason against the true representations of God in Christ Jesus.

We have not freed this subject from all its difficulties; we cannot do this until we know all things; and we shall not know all things until we leave the body, and rise to the heavenly land. We now see through a glass darkly; but I think that over against the dark side, over against doubting and questioning unbeliefs which frequently creep into the minds of those who muse and meditate, I have set some considerations which throw light upon our path.

I remark, then, first, in making a few points of application to this illustration, that it ought not to be a matter of incaution, or indifference, or accident, how persons come together in the household estate. Knowledge should precede marriage; and a child that has wise parents should take heed to the counsels which, from their own experience, they can give; and more and more selection should be made, not by chance affection, but according to those great laws which are being laid open and made known to men by the researches of the wise. To rush heedlessly into marriage; to take upon one's self all the obligations implied in it, in a light-hearted spirit, without deep thought, is sacrilege. Nor ought we to permit ourselves to suppose that all love that leads to marriage should of necessity be merely a sentiment. Because calculated marriages, because parentally-arranged marriages, are so apt to be in the interest of selfishness; and because there is so much beauty in the enthusiasm of an involuntary love, some have come to believe that it is not right in any way whatever to interfere with accidental choices between heart and heart; but the pitiful experience which has often followed such choices ought to teach us more wisdom. Certainly it ought to teach us more caution. They who are laying the foundations of households on which their weal or woe is to depend, and who are to bring into life children whose immortality will be largely dependent on their care, ought not to rush into the family relation without thought, or the light of experience.

I, too, believe in romance. I believe in love at first sight—provided it is a love that will stand second sight. I believe in disinterested affection. Nor would I counsel my children to marry for money, or for distinction, or for position. I should rather say to them, "In regard to money, *make* what you are to spend; and as to position, *earn* it. Do not *steal* it through somebody's daughter!" Manhood; an honorable self-reliance; a pride that does not mean self-liking, but that means elevation above all low and vulgar considerations and motives—this should give one a competence, and should lift him into a high position. But it is not necessary that

we should be blind as a bat in order to be disinterested. Having eyes, look; having ears, listen; and having an understanding heart, learn. The experience of ordinary life shows that there are ways which seem right to a man whose ends are death—nay, worse than that, a whole generation of family discords; and that there are ways which seem hard to a man, whose ends are blissful, so as almost to equal our conceptions of heaven.

There is no nobler state than that of marriage. When men have entered into that state they stand nearest to God. Yea, they stand where the very law and love of God will be translated into human experience. Into this high estate men should enter religiously, seriously, and with instruction.

I remark, secondly, that I would not quench one single ray of the joy and cheerful hope that is felt when children are born into the household. God sends them; they are his; and although it seems, on the earth-side, often, as though he had sent them by a strange door, and left them almost like foundlings in your hands; on the other side, where we cannot see, and faith only can interpret, no child is born into our hands here that it is not taken out of his hand there. I believe that God sends children into life, and never forgets them. Strange as the companionship may be—so strange that we cannot clear the mystery; yet to me ten thousand questions are solved by the declaration, "It doth not yet appear what we shall be." I believe that our children come out of the bosom of God's love, that they are born in hope, and that they are to be brooded over by the divine providence. This is an unspeakable comfort. When growing up, as long as they are yet children, they grow up within the bounds and covenants of the divine love; and when they come to man's estate, their responsibility is graded by God: not by the human mind, but by Him who knows all things; so that no man will feel one single particle more penalty than he deserves. Such is the justice of universal love that no man will suffer so much as by a single hair of his head more than that which is amply and abundantly his desert. Men's mistakes; their infirmities; their ten thousand biases and blunders and stumblings; all that which does not go to constitute deliberate and voluntary transgression will not be counted against them in the way of penal settlement.

It is in this light, too, that I find great comfort in the departure of my children from me. No person is fully united to another by love, nor by hope, nor by co-operative work in this world. Our friendships are never completed till we are bound to each other by the common experiences of sorrow; and I am united to you by

those experiences. I have often been called to comfort you, in the providence of God, when your little children were gone; and God has made me an able minister of consolation under such circumstances. He has taken my children from me; and whatever you know, I know. I have shed tears in the day and in the night; and have gone for years so that I could not hear the name of my children and keep my voice. I know what longing is. I know what lonesomeness is. I know what that unspoken, unutterable, and unsolvable ache of the heart is which is known of God, but which no philosophy can compass or define. And I know another thing—that all our children that have gone from us, are unspeakably better off than when they were with us. They have gone whence they came. They have gone back to eternal life. They have gone under the convoy of angels. If while they are in our care God's angels minister to them and watch over them, how much more will be ministered to them when they shall have lost what little we can do for them! If they are convoyed by angels here, how much more will they be convoyed by angels in the other life! Our infant children are safe.

Shall we know them again? Will they be children when we meet them? Will they be ours? or will they be like drops which fall into the sea, and are a part of it? Who can tell me? Let him speak. I cannot tell. But one thing I know—that when we are in the other life we shall be more than satisfied; and that is all we ought to need to know about it. Our infant children are safe.

But what of those that are older? My child was five years old: is he safe? My boy was eight years old—brave, noble little fellow: is he safe? My little girl of twelve years old, who had never joined the church, and had her faults, and went to school and came home again, singing morning and evening sweeter than birds, and often needed rebuke and watch and care, and suddenly fell under a stroke scarlatina, and died almost without a word, mute: is she safe? My noble child that was fifteen, sixteen, and had much of manhood in him: is he safe?

Do you believe that the justice of universal Love is poorer than the justice of man's love? After an experience of thousands of years, the State says, "I do not consider a man fit to take care of his own business until he is twenty-one years old." Men are not regarded as ripe enough to be fully responsible to the laws of their country before they have reached that age. Some are mature a great deal earlier, but some, not until a great deal later; and some, never, but the State, judging from the average experience of its history, says, "I will not commit to a man his property, and hold him fully

responsible, except through his parents or guardians, until he is twenty-one." It regards him as a minor until then. Not that this is a magic number, and that every one, when he is just twenty-one, is a man; but the average experience on earth dictates that so long as a man is comparatively immature, he ought not to be held to a full responsibility. And is God less tender and less considerate than men?

Do not be afraid to trust your children in the hands of him who died rather than to hurt. God showed his love for us when we were enemies; and now that we are reconciled to him will he be less lenient toward us than he was then? He would rather die than that we should die. He would rather suffer than that we should suffer. Is it not enough that He who is regent is one who would rather suffer himself than inflict suffering on others? That is all I want to know. I am willing to trust my children and myself to a love which would rather suffer than inflict suffering.

Go, then, little ones, singing. Spring is coming. The flowers are everywhere holding up their chalices and sending forth their fragrance toward God; and the birds are flying in every tree with sweet songs. Blessed are they that must part with their children, if they go when everything is singing again. There is a sadness in burying our children in winter. I know; for I have done it. And there is a sadness in burying them in autumn. But when there is resurrection all over the globe; when the hills rejoice; when the clouds themselves speak gladness to the recreated earth; when all the birds, and beasts, and roots, and blades of grass, and flowers, are so many syllables of divine revelation, saying, "Ye live again"—then it is not so hard to send our children home. Blessed are they whose little ones, if they must go, take their flight through all these magnificent symbols of new life, prolonged life, undying life.

Give your children to Christ, and not to fate. Give them to God, having given yourselves to him, and wait, and you shall have them again in over-measure, more beautiful and sweeter, a thousand times.

PRAYER BEFORE THE SERMON.*

Our Father, we thank thee for that name by which heaven is opened to us; by which we are emboldened to draw near to thee; by which we have, in our own life, a perpetual interpretation of thee.

We bring all our dear children to thee, sure that if thou art Father, then fatherhood in thee means more and better things than it can mean in us. And though we would not compass thee with our weakness, nor transfer to our conception of thee those things which are in us by reason of imperfection, yet all that in us is divine and good we would transfer to our thoughts of thee, making it still more noble, lifting it up into the eternal sphere, and giving to it infinite proportion, and bounty endless and incomprehensible. We desire to think of thee as loving with an everlasting love. When we look at the selfishness that belongs to our affection, even when it is strongest; when we see how full of mixed emotion is even our love for our children, we rejoice in believing that there is a love super-eminent above all human experience and its phenomena. We rejoice that the love of God is pure and disinterested; that it has no selfishness, and no pride, and no weariness, and no unwisdom; that it sacrifices nothing that is good. We rejoice that by love thou art seeking to lift all up out of degradation, and to purge all from their transgressions; that by love thou art inspiring us toward rectitude; that by love thou art kindling the fire and removing the dross; that by love thou art chastising men to teach them obedience; that by love thou art pruning and taking away whatsoever thing hinders growth and fruitfulness. We rejoice in the executive power and in the cleansing influence of divine love. If in wrath thou wert avenging thyself, we could not endure. Nor could we worship one who was kindled and who burned with an eternal vengeance. We rejoice that there is no such vengeance with thee as there is with men, low, and proud, and selfish, and cruel. We rejoice that all the pain-bearing messengers which come forth from thee come to minister and to mitigate. And we, discerning afar the power of patience, and the power of wisdom, and the power of love, rejoice to believe that thou art triumphing in the eternal sphere. We rejoice that, by-and-by, star shall answer to star, and troop shall follow troop, reporting themselves in the heavenly plain, and bearing testimony. We rejoice that there shall be living witnesses, through ages, and from every place, of the wonder of thy dispensations of mercy and of grace by which they were built up into the stature of perfect men in Christ Jesus, and by which they were made spirits justified and saved.

We commend to thy care those who have brought their little children with them this morning, and who, in the midst of this household of faith, and with the sympathy of their brethren round about them, have offered them up in consecration. We pray that they may feel that they are bound by their obligations, here, and now, to bring up these children with all painstaking and fidelity, in knowledge, in virtue, in truth, in honor, in unworldliness, in reverence and obedience toward God, and in piety. May these seem more to them than all other things. And while they are bringing them up in the world by its instrumentalities, may they have power given them to overcome the world in the things in which it is bad or base, and may they triumph while they serve.

And we beseech of thee that thou wilt have compassion upon these little ones. Spare their lives, if that be consistent with thy will; or prepare their parents to yield them up again to him who gave them, if that be thy purpose.

* Immediately following the baptism of children.

And we beseech of thee that thou wilt bless the households from which they have come. May they know how great is their privilege, and how great is the bounty of God toward them, in the presence of these little children. They cannot reckon the joys which they have. They never can measure nor interpret their favors and the testimonies of God's kindness toward them in their little ones.

We beseech of thee that in every household where children are thy Spirit may dwell, for their sake, and for their parents' sake. And may these parents, by teaching them the first elements of human knowledge in their helplessness and need, be so exercised by self-denial and by serving, that they shall be themselves taught more than they teach. And we pray that thou wilt grant that all the youth in our midst may grow up pure, strong, and able to endure the world, and to overcome it, by Christian honor, and Christian truth, and Christian purity.

And we pray that thou wilt bless those who are instructing the young—superintendents and teachers in our schools, and the instructors in our Bible-classes. And wilt thou bless all the pupils that are therein.

We thank thee for so wide a field. We thank thee for such glorious harvestings as thou hast granted us. And we pray that thou wilt continue thy divine goodness to us in these regards.

Bless, we pray thee, all the families that are in this parish. May they come up in remembrance before thee. We pray that thou wilt sanctify the joy of every household in which joy reigns. Sanctify the sorrows, also, which come to so many dwellings. Grant, we pray thee, that the intrusion of sorrow may not be to them a sign of God's anger. May it be a celestial visitant to them. Though it be clothed in darkness, may they know that at heart it is light and bright, and brings testimony of God's favor. And may every sorrowing one hear thee saying, Whom I love I chasten, and scourge every son whom I receive. We pray that they may be exercised by the divine hand, and that they may not mourn nor rebel when they are in any wise disciplined by the divine wisdom, but may submit to the will of God as manifested in his providence, gently and sweetly, and be able to say, in all their trouble, I am sustained by the Lord. And may we, here, by joy and sorrow, be better fitted for the tasks that remain for us in this life. May we be prepared thereby for that which must come to us, all of us, before long. May we so look at our households and our affairs in life, and so take account of our states of heart, as to know whether we are at any hour prepared for the coming of the Son of Man, whether we shall go early, or at midday, or late.

We behold on every side the testimony of death. The great are falling on the right and on the left. Thou art not sparing the infant of days. We see borne past us, day by day, the young as well as the aged. Those that are in honor are as open to death as those that are in obscurity. Thou art breaking the stay and the staff of the strong ones. We beseech of thee that all may take heed of thy ministration of death and of life. Through death and life we have solid hope and certitude in Christ Jesus. May we have in ourselves the witness of that acceptance by which we shall look upon death, not calmly alone, but rejoicingly, and, if it may be, longingly. And prepare us, we beseech of thee, when we shall have gone through the brief and mute experience of this life, to break forth on the other side, with new life, a new song, a better heart, a nobler aspiration, and join with the innumerable throng that, night and day, praise thee around about thy throne, giving to the Father, the Son, and the Spirit the praise of our salvation, forever and ever. *Amen.*

PRAYER AFTER THE SERMON.

We pray for thy blessing to rest upon the word spoken. Grant that it may comfort, enlighten, strengthen, and cheer us. Bless all that are in trouble. Deliver them by faith and hope out of their trouble; or, if needful for medicine in the soul that they should ache and bear pain, strengthen and comfort them. Draw near to them, and relieve them. And at last, to all of us, way-worn and weary, send a joyful messenger, and say, Come up hither. Then may we lay aside the robe, the weight, the burden, the staff, and the sandal; and may we rise to be forever with the Lord. And to the Father, the Son, and the Spirit, be praises everlasting. *Amen.*

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